

What is claimed is:

1. An isolated strain of *Bradyrhizobium* having increased nodulation characteristics, wherein a gene comprising a nucleotide sequence that hybridizes to the nucleotide sequence of SEQ ID NO:1 or SEQ ID NO:2 under 5X SSC and 42°C wash conditions is not expressed.
2. The strain according to claim 1, wherein said gene comprises SEQ ID NO:1 or SEQ ID NO:2.
3. The strain according to claim 2, wherein said gene comprises SEQ ID NO:1 and SEQ ID NO:2, wherein SEQ ID NO:1 is located upstream of SEQ ID NO:2.
4. The strain according to claim 1, wherein said *Bradyrhizobium* has a deposit number of NRRL-B-30052 or NRRL-B-30053.
5. A method for promoting nodulation of a leguminous plant, comprising:
  - (i) inoculating a plant or a place near a plant root with a nodulating effective amount of an inoculum comprising an isolated strain of *Bradyrhizobium* having increased nodulation characteristics, wherein a gene comprising a nucleotide sequence that hybridizes to the nucleotide sequence of SEQ ID NO:1 or SEQ ID NO:2 under 5X SSC and 42°C wash conditions is not expressed, and
  - (ii) allowing the *Bradyrhizobium* strain to inoculate the root.
6. The method of claim 5, wherein the leguminous plant is selected from the group consisting of soybean, cowpea mungbean and siratro.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein the leguminous plant is soybean.
8. The method according to claim 5, wherein said *Bradyrhizobium* strain has a deposit number of NRRL-B-30052 or NRRL-B-30053.
9. An isolated gene comprising a nucleotide sequence that hybridizes to the nucleotide sequence of SEQ ID NO:1 or SEQ ID NO:2 under 5X SSC and 42°C wash conditions.
10. The gene according to claim 9, wherein said gene comprises SEQ ID NO:1 or SEQ ID NO:2.
11. The gene according to claim 10, wherein said gene comprises SEQ ID NO:1 and SEQ ID NO:2, wherein SEQ ID NO:1 is located upstream of SEQ ID NO:2.
12. A plant seed coated with the *Bradyrhizobium* strain according to claim 1.
13. The plant seed according to claim 12, wherein said plant is soybean.
14. A composition comprising an isolated strain of *Bradyrhizobium* having increased nodulation characteristics, wherein a gene comprising a nucleotide sequence that hybridizes to the nucleotide sequence of SEQ ID NO:1 or SEQ ID NO:2 under 5X SSC and 42°C wash conditions is not expressed, and an agriculturally acceptable carrier thereof.

15. The composition according to claim 14, wherein said *Bradyrhizobium* has a deposit number of NRRL-B-30052 or NRRL-B-30053.

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